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IRELAND.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L.

MR. GLADSTONE, in his new-born enthusiasm for Home Rule, went so far as to compare the Act of Union to the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. He had once spoken of the Act of Union and the Treaty of Commerce with France as the two great achievements of Pitt. But with his marvellous powers of explanation he would have found no difficulty in showing, not only that the two views were consistent, but that one of them logically led up to the other; just as he found no difficulty in reconciling his denunciation of Parnell as wading through rapine to dismemberment with his subsequent ratification of Parnell's policy and his alliance with its author. Mr. Gladstone was great and good, supremely so when he was pleading the cause of oppressed nationalities, as in the case of Italy and that of the subjects of Turkey. But if there are any who think that he was not liable to sudden impulses, that he was never carried away by the struggle for power, or that he was wholly incapable of self-delusion, they cannot have known the man.

When Mr. Gladstone brought forward his measure for Home Rule, he had been in Ireland only three weeks, and not at a good point of view. His speeches, though they were sure to be powerful, show no knowledge of the Irish people, no conception of the forces, political and social, which after separation would be likely to prevail, no forecast of the future. The orator is dealing with an abstraction. He does not even show acquaintance with the facts of Irish history, which is not less necessary to the legislator than it is to the historian. For the key to Irish character, in large measure, is Irish history. That there is such a thing as race character cannot be denied. Teuton and Celt undeniably have shown it. But of most that is called Celtic in Irish character seven centuries of unparalleled misfortune are the real cause.

The Norman conquest of England was complete, and gave birth to a feudal polity with an hereditary monarch at its head, the feudal code of law, and an aristocracy which, though at first alien and oppressive, became national and gave the nation the Great Charter. The Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland, as a private enterprise, though under royal and papal auspices, was incomplete, and produced, not a national polity, but a military colony or Pale. Far the greater part of the island continued to be held by the Irish tribes, with their native language and customs, their tribal form of government, and their tribal ownership of land. Between the tribes and the colony there went on from generation to generation incessant and most barbarous war. The nature of the country, with its forests, broad rivers, and bogs, was adverse to the Anglo-Norman men-at-arms. At the same time, it prevented a union of the tribes and a combination of their forces against the invaders.

The colony had the semblance of a feudal polity, with a baronial council as well as the feudal law and the feudal tenure of land. But the King, the key-stone of the feudal arch, was wanting. Cabal, disorders, and corruption reigned. The military power of the English monarchy was wasted on French fields. Richard II came over with an army which, under his incapable command, was frittered away. The passage of the Channel was serious in those days; and Wales, the point of transit, was wild. The colony was discredited and starved. A Scotch invasion under Edward, the brother of Robert Bruce, though repelled after a severe struggle by the Anglo-Normans of the Pale, had helped to wreck whatever rudiments of order there might be; and, by the middle of the fifteenth century, the Anglo-Norman domain in Ireland had been reduced to a narrow district round Dublin, defended by a ditch.

Meantime, tribal license had proved attractive. Laws had been found necessary to prevent Englishmen from degenerating into wild Irishry. By a process not clearly explained, Anglo-Norman chiefs of the Pale had become heads of septs, combining tribal with feudal sway and keeping in their pay bands of mercenaries called "gallowglass," something like the *bravi* of the great nobles in Italy. These chiefs, with their septs, are henceforth the native powers and the defenders of native Ireland against the conquest. The most powerful of them were the Geraldines and the Butlers.

Rivalry often led the Butlers, with their war-cry of "Butler-a-boo," to side with the English Government.

In the quarrel of the Roses, Dublin took the Yorkist side. This, when the Red Rose had triumphed under the first Tudor King, led to the passing of the Poynings Act, so called from the Deputy of the day, by which an end was put to the independence of the Dublin Parliament. It was enacted that all existing English laws should be in force in Ireland, and that no Parliament should be held in Ireland without the sanction of the King and Council, who should also be enabled to disallow statutes passed by the Irish houses. The Parliament of Ireland had been made by Edward I bicameral, like the Parliament of England.

Henry VII, and for a time his son, tried to govern Ireland, a costly and restive possession, through native chiefs captivated by titles of nobility and court favor. The policy failed. The Geraldine, under pretence of fighting for the monarchy, fought for his own ends. Recourse was had again to the sword, which thenceforth a succession of Deputies continued to wield in most barbarous and exterminating war. Prisoners of war were butchered without mercy, the country was laid waste, the cattle were destroyed, and famine stalked in the train of slaughter. But these "hostings," while they engendered desperate hatred, did little towards effecting a general and permanent conquest.

Now came the Reformation, and to enmity of race it added the enmity of religion. It extended not beyond the English colony, at the border of which it was arrested by difference of language as well as of race. The Churches had always been divided on that line, though their creeds and their allegiance to Rome had been the same. Catholic Ireland was now drawn into the league of the Catholic Powers of Europe and suffered as a weak and outlying member of the league was sure to do. The intrigue of the Jesuit was encountered by the Puritan sword, and the work of slaughter and devastation went on in a more deadly form than ever. The government of Elizabeth, or rather that of Burleigh, made a noble but vain effort to set on foot a policy of civilization, the monument of which is Trinity College. Under a succession of leaders, the Irish Catholics, as they may now be distinctly called, rose and maintained the struggle against a series of Deputies whom the English Government, straitened in its resources by the struggle on the Continent and danger at home,

could not supply with the means of decisive war. The last leaders of Irish independence, the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, surrendered or were scared into exile, and after a struggle of five centuries the conquest of Ireland was achieved. English law and administration were extended over the whole island; and, what was of paramount importance, the feudal rule superseded the tribal custom in regard to the ownership of land.

The Government, perhaps inspired by Bacon, was not, in intention at least, unkind. It sought to placate and civilize. It called a Parliament of all Ireland, which, though no doubt practically nominated by the Crown, was otherwise more like a national Parliament than any other that Ireland ever had. But it treated the vast estates on the feudal principle as personal property forfeited for treason, disregarding the rights of the tribesmen. A host of English and Scotch settlers poured in, possessed themselves of the lands by purchase or chicane, and formed in Ulster a sort of Protestant Pale.

When, under Charles I, trouble began in England, the dispossessed tribesmen of Ulster rose, massacred with circumstances of the most devilish cruelty thousands of the new proprietors and drove out the rest. The English Parliament, fired with fury, passed a sweeping Act of Confiscation and sold debentures on it to provide a force for the repression and punishment of the rebellion. But, England being engaged in civil war, Ireland was left to itself for eight years, during which the two parties, now distinguishable as Protestant and Catholic, waged internecine war and made the land a hell; the representative of Rome taking an active part, together with the native priesthood and giving the conflict a distinctly religious character.

At last came Cromwell. The storm of Drogheda has left a stain, as he seems to have felt, upon his name. But he restored peace and order, he governed powerfully and well. He united Ireland as well as Scotland to England, and had her represented in the Parliament of the Commonwealth, giving her thereby the inestimable benefit of free trade with England and exempting her shipping from the shackles of the Navigation Act. He used her as a field for reforms, from which prejudice debarred him in England. The Royalist Clarendon speaks rapturously of the progress which material improvement made under Cromwell's rule. The dispossession of Catholic landowners and their

transportation to Connaught were in pursuance of the Act of Confiscation under which the holders of debentures claimed. It had been proved with terrible force that the two sets of land-owners could not live together.

At the Restoration the dispossessed put in their claim for restitution. But the new possessors, after a long controversy, held their ground, and Ulster remained a Protestant Pale. The union with England was broken, the immediate consequence being the loss of free trade with England and the commencement by the English Parliament of a course of Protectionist legislation which killed in succession the principal industries of Ireland.

Again, under James II, the Irish Catholics rose and were again at length put down. Protestantism, victorious and vengeful after a narrow escape from destruction, embodied its rage and fear in the Penal Code, which reduced to helotage, religious, political, and social, the Catholics; that is, five-sixths of the population. Nothing could be more detestable, unless it was the persecution of the unoffending Huguenots by the Catholic Government of France.

The state of the Irish peasantry in the period which followed and down to the date of the Union was miserable and degraded in the extreme. The Catholic landowners having been driven away by the Penal Code, the Catholic peasant was left without protection against the tyranny of the Protestant squires and squireens. He was ground down by the exactions of the middleman and the tithe proctor. His dwelling, his food and raiment were bestial. Such wretchedness has been seldom seen. The oppressed banded themselves together as Whiteboys for agrarian murder and outrage, and made night hideous with the moanings of houghed cattle.

When Scotland was united to England, the Irish Parliament yearned for a similar union. It, no doubt, English and Protestant as it was, felt the pressure of the English tariff. Its advances were repelled, English Protectionism, we may be sure, playing its part. Patriots then turned their thoughts to national independence and Parliamentary reform. A large proportion of the seats in Parliament were held by the owners or lessees of rotten boroughs, and government was organized corruption. National independence and Parliamentary reform had an eloquent champion in Grattan.

Nationalism found its opportunity when the hands of England were full with the war against the American colonies. It rose in arms and extorted legislative independence. The Poyning's Act and the Act of George III, confirming it, were repealed. There was then a trial of the polity which Home Rule would now restore, that of two Parliaments under one Crown. But the Irish Parliament, whatever might be Grattan's rapture, was very far from being national. It was a Parliament of Protestant Ascendancy from which four-fifths, at least, of the Irish nation were shut out. The Catholics were presently admitted to the electoral franchise, but not to seats in Parliament. An agitation for their admission to seats in Parliament was on foot when there came a general overturn. It is not likely that the Ascendancy would have consented to a concession which to it would have been suicide. England could not rob Ireland of her national Parliament, inasmuch as a Parliament really national Ireland never had.

For the peasant, trampled on, starved, degraded, miserable as ever, nothing was done by the "national" legislators. His case got no hearing when it came before them. His wretchedness was greater and his hatred of his oppressor was more intense than ever.

How did the union of the Parliaments under one Crown work? There was a serious quarrel about the tariff, ending in the rejection of Pitt's beneficial measure of free trade. There was a still more serious quarrel about the Regency. The quarrel about the Regency must apparently have led to disruption if George III had not recovered just in time. Grattan was true to the union, yet he could not help being drawn into the quarrel about the Regency.

Then came the French Revolution. The freethinkers of Belfast caught the flame and organized a nationalist and republican rebellion. Counting all rebellion their ally, they drew in a large body of the Catholic peasantry, who were agrarian, not political, rebels, with some of the priests as their leaders. There followed over a part of the island a civil war of devils, at the end of which people were afraid to eat pork lest it should have been fed on human flesh. Meantime, only the winds and waves saved Ireland from being conquered by Hoche.

The "national" Parliament of Ireland urged the most ruth-

less repression. About its last Act was one of indemnity for the illegal infliction of torture on suspected rebels. Grattan seceded early in the day.

Pitt was resolved on union. It had to be carried through an Irish Parliament of Ascendancy, full of members for nomination boroughs, and teeming with corrupt interests. This was done by means not pure, yet not more impure than the influences by which the measure was opposed. Cromwell had carried his Union by fiat, Pitt had not that power. There was, however, no money bribery, none at least of any serious amount. The large sums paid to members of the Irish Parliament were not bribes but indemnities voted to the owners of nomination boroughs, which were regarded and treated as personal property in those days. The same was done in a Reform Bill for England. The largest sum of all was paid to an opponent of the Union. There was a traffic in peerages and appointments which disgusted a man of honor like Cornwallis, but the consent of a powerful and selfish aristocracy to a vital measure had to be obtained. How far the Catholics were misled by Pitt's favorable attitude on the question of Catholic emancipation it is impossible to say; what is certain is that Pitt was sincere. When George III refused his assent, Pitt resigned. What more could he do? He could not depose the King.

In Dublin, the heart of nationalism and radicalism, the Union, Cornwallis tells us, was proclaimed without calling forth adverse demonstrations of any kind. In the general election to the United Parliament which followed, the "Annual Register" tells us, the Union was not an issue, and to have voted for it did no candidate any harm. The three great opponents of the Union in the Irish Parliament were Grattan, Plunkett and Foster. All three sat in the United Parliament; Plunkett formally recanted his opposition, Foster accepted office and a peerage under Pitt, and Grattan repudiated O'Connell.

In less than a generation Catholic emancipation was carried, a great English party combining with the Irish movement. Of Ascendancy nothing then remained but the State Church, which has since been abolished. Now, it seems, Irish industry is beginning to feel the financial pressure of its own priesthood.

Agitators never renounce agitation. From Catholic Emancipation O'Connell went on to Repeal of the Union. He dropped

it while there was a weak Whig Government, whose influence and patronage he could command. He took it up again when the strong Conservative Government of Peel came in; and, though he had the priesthood at his back, was totally overthrown. In 1848, the year of revolution, Smith O'Brien, with a brilliant staff of young enthusiasts, raised the Repeal banner, found the people utterly apathetic, and encountered a still more ignominious defeat. What the Irish peasant wanted was not political change, but material improvement of his condition, security in his holding and more bread. When Parnell combined the agrarian with the political movement the political movement gained a factitious life. Fenianism, mainly an American product, also helped to impart a political tinge.

If the peasant wanted anything in the political way, perhaps it was the presence of the King. No King of England paid a friendly visit to Ireland before George IV, who met with an enthusiastic reception, in which O'Connell took a leading part.

Ireland has more than her fair share of representation in the United Parliament, and everything in the United Kingdom and in the Empire is perfectly open to her sons.

GOLDWIN SMITH.